

## **Vets Over-represented Among Homeless Men and Women**

VISN 1 MIRECC researchers have discovered high risk for homelessness in both male and female veterans in a 1996 national survey. In comparison with non-veterans, female veterans were 2-4 times more likely to be homeless and male veterans had a 25% increase in risk for homelessness. Among male veterans, highest rates of homelessness were found for those who were the first to enlist in the All Volunteer Force, during the mid-1970's through mid-1980's. These men aged 35-44 in 1996, were far more likely to be homeless than Vietnam-Era vets or younger vets who enlisted after the Mid-1980's. These trends suggest a high rate of maladjustment among early recruits following the 1975 cessation of the draft. The investigators attribute the reductions homelessness in younger veterans to more recent efforts to improve the caliber of recruits, such as the "Be All that You Can Be" advertising campaign and the positive image of the military inspired by the Persian Gulf War. This is the first study to show the particularly high rates of homeless among women veterans as compared with male veterans. While the researchers had no ready explanation for this troubling finding, the importance of the problem is likely to rise as the proportion of women in the military service tripled (from 4% to 12%) in the years between 1983 and 2000. The research team is made up of Gail Gamache, Ph.D., Robert Rosenheck, M.D., and Richard Tessler, Ph.D.